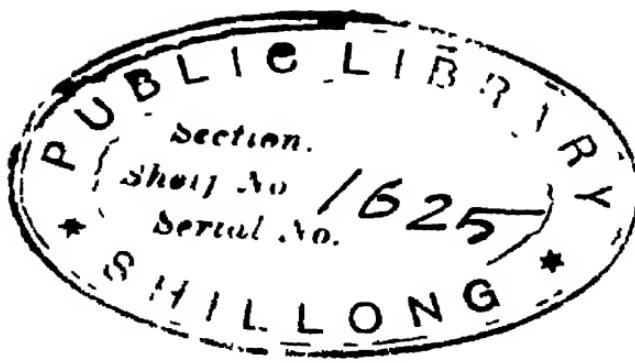


COMPLETE WORKS OF
CHARLES F. BROWNE,
BETTER KNOWN AS
“ARTEMUS WARD.”

Ballantyne's Press
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THE
COMPLETE WORKS OF
CHARLES F. BROWNE

BETTER KNOWN AS

"ARTEMUS WARD"



*WITH PORTRAIT BY GEOFLOWSKI
FACSIMILE OF HANDWRITING, &c.*

London
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New York, July 24/65-

My Dear Sir

I expect to visit England in a few months: my engagements scarcely permit me to go now. I have read many of the critiques in your journals. They are generally very friendly, some of them extraordinarily so, and in greater where I think you will subscribe.

The success of my Book does not give me the success of my entertainment of critics, but I hope the latter is novel enough to please your people.

Hoping to soon see you.—
I am, & always, Sir,
Most faithfully yours
C. H. C. M. D. W.

Admiral Ward

A R T E M U S W A R D
HIS BOOK.

AT THE DOOR OF THE TENT.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Show is about to commence. You could not well expect to go in without paying, but you may pay without going in. I can say no fairer than that.



INTRODUCTION.

MUCH of the quaintness observable in American humour has come down from the old Puritans, whose sober treatment of comic things and comic treatment of sober matters give their talk a very different effect at the present time to what they intended. Old New England sermons abound in these inconsistencies ; and, instead of being dull reading, are often the lightest, although the preachers were totally unaware of the comic touches they were giving to their outpourings. I have read somewhere a story of a pious but strong blacksmith—I think Mr Dickens knows something of the authorship—who pummelled an unbeliever into a state of satisfactory conversion, timing his blows to the most awakening revival tunes that he was master of. The tale is not overdrawn, and I feel satisfied the occurrence has happened somewhere in America at one time or another.

Not many years since, there was a famous preacher of the old Puritan school in one of the New England States, who used to play such pranks in the pulpit as our Rowland Hill is said to have done, and as a contemporary now occasionally indulges in at the Tabernacle, only the Rev. Lorenzo Dow was the more daring performer of the three. On one occasion he took a text from Paul, "*I can do all things.*" The preacher paused, took off his spectacles, laid them on the open Bible, and said, "No, Paul, you are mistaken for once ; I'll bet you five dollars you can't, and stake the money." At the same time putting his hand into his pocket, he took out a five-

dollar bill, laid it on the Bible, took up his spectacles again, and read, "*Through Jesus Christ our Lord.*" "Ah, Paul!" exclaimed Dow, snatching up the five-dollar bill, and returning it to his pocket, "that's a very different matter; the bet's withdrawn."

The best stories I ever heard were those of a travelling American Methodist, at a place called Council Hill, a few miles back from the Upper Mississippi. He used to draw the neighbourhood twice or three times a week to "class-meetings;" but the great treat for the people were his comic tales and "experiences"—as he termed them—which he used to narrate at the brick store opposite, always crowded when Preacher Williams was in the way. He was a great man amongst the religious folk, and the most powerful revivalist in those parts; the whole village, on one occasion, being closed to business for three days, the community in their best clothes, and all given up to the work of the Spirit, except two or three stubborn old bar-room keepers at the other end of the place, who were loudly prayed for in the meeting-house day and night. Preacher Williams' great art in "fetching" the house was shedding tears, which usually brought up the handkerchiefs from the females and the sleeves of the men in sorrowing sympathy, with numerous *amens* from the deaf old people behind, who could only tell by the movement in handkerchiefs when it was their turn to begin; but crying had become so common to him, that telling a story had much the same effect upon his eyes as a sermon, and the consequence was, he always had a bleared, weak-eyed look. Otherwise he was not a bad-looking man. Gossipers did say that he w^{ld} have been a bishop long ago but for this fatal gift at story-telling, which made the less talented ministers very jealous of him.

This mixing of sacred with secular matters, commenced by the Puritans, is now common in almost all American thought and expression. In a senator's speech, in a stump oration, in a newspaper article, a parallel drawn anywhere from Genesis

to the Revelations is considered not only fair but elegant. In their humorous poems, as we all know by the "Biglow Papers," such biblical references are common. Some journals in this country rather severely criticised Mr Lowell for this, to them, exhibition of bad taste; but it may be doubted whether the Americans of the present day intend religious disrespect, any more than did the Puritan preachers of old. One thing is certain, that incongruity of ideas is carried to a much greater extent in American humour than it is in our own; and it is this mental exaggeration, this odd mixture of widely different thoughts, that distinguishes Yankee from English fun.

Most countries have a great many floating metaphors and popular figures of speech, which are full of amusement to the foreigner. Our own streets have many such quaint expressions, and the language is continually being recruited from them. In Artemus Ward's book the recent popular fun of America has been gathered up, and we may see in it a great deal of that small talk, that "chaff"—if we may so speak—which crowds are always casting up for their amusement.

The incongruity of ideas just mentioned as peculiar to America, is especially observable in Artemus Ward. He is a cunning old fellow, with plenty of low humour, but without any education; yet from his address card we may see that he figures as newspaper correspondent as well as orator and statesman. Of course the character is heightened for the sake of the fun; but the portrait of Artemus, as given in "His Book," is not wholly caricature. In all parts of the United States many such odd personages may be met with. On the steam-boats of the Western rivers, in the railway cars, on the back-woods, the brothers and sisters of Mr Ward may be found. The country seems to delight in them, and it certainly never lacks any supply. Some years since, the best joker on the Mississippi was a "down east" man, who left his native state to mind a wood-pile in Tennessee. He lived by himself, and

I do not think there was any house nearer to him than twenty or thirty miles ; but he was as full of fun and news as if he got a good living by comic penny-a-lining in a big city. His log shanty was close by the wood-pile, and his sole protection from some rather ugly wild animals in those parts was an old rifle hung up over the door. He begged newspapers from all steamboats that stopped to "wood-up," and in general chaff was more than a match for the passengers and crew combined. Like many other Americans, he had been through the whole directory of trades—by turns schoolmaster, stoickeeper, nigger-driver (his last occupation), farmer, travelling dentist, and in the photographic line. He had one vanity, however—dress. On Sundays he came forth far finer than did the other Robinson Crusoe on the first day of the week. A finely-plaited white shirt, black satin waistcoat (the delight of the fashionable West), and patent leather store boots, formed his usual attire on the Sabbath. I almost forgot to say that he had been a temperance man, doing good Fourth-of-July work when young, but latterly he had thought that a jug of whisky might be company for him, so he kept one, which was filled up from the boats as they passed.

There was a strange old fellow, an early settler in Illinois, who gave a name to a tract of land in those parts. He was mild on all topics but one—teetotalism. Any wayfarer might have bed and board for a night, but woe betide him if he objected to take a glass with his host. Old M—— had one stock lecture always on hand. It was dead against the men who pledged themselves adverse to inebriating liquors. "Teu thunk," said the lecturer, "that Gaud shude gev us sich luvin pœufs as Ohiar whiskey, old ruer, and the best Neuw York brandy, and them all-fired temprunco' ranturs shude go agy. Him and His wrucks ded-set. Say, you meesly critturs, why doant yir rail agin the Maker for givin us four-wheeled wag-gins, state tickets, steam-threshers, and other things sleeghtly oncaftin in the runnin ? Liquors is blessings, groserys is bless-

ins, hand-saws is blessins, only we don't all go to once and saw our fingurs off kerslap ! Do we ? Say, will yer ?"

There was another odd personage in the immediate neighbourhood, C. B. Denio, a whitewasher and stump speaker, also a lecturer. I don't suppose he ever had ten cents spent upon his early education, and he used to appear rather proud of being called off a ladder to address his "feller citerzens," with the sprinkles of whitewash still adhering to his face and clothes; but he was what is known there as a powerful speaker, and soon after he was elected to the Legislature. At the present moment he is one of the principal officers of state in California.

Characters of this kind are the idols of the American popular mind, and the supply quite keeps pace with the demand. An ungenerous traveller in the United States, remarking on the difference betwixt public taste and opinion there, as compared with the feeling of the middle classes here, has said that a laudable desire to excel is the general characteristic of Americans, but that high moral competition was sadly interfered with by another taste which had a latent existence in all classes of society, from the bishops downwards—viz., to fight and drink whisky.

The first mention that the writer remembers of Artemus Ward was in *Vanity Fair*, a sort of New York *Punch*, where some very comic paragraphs appeared from time to time, giving us the sayings and opinions of "the showman," as he delighted in calling himself. These little sketches, dressed up in a burlesque orthography, and leaning on the broad Yankee dialect, like Burns' songs on the Scotch, for an increase of effect, soon attracted very general attention, and were quoted in the newspapers far and wide. Like Major Jack Downing, whose "Letters" at one time were famous, but which latterly have been found not equal in humour to the requirements of the crowd, Artemus Ward soon became a distinct character in the popular mind, and on any public occasion his opinion is almost sure to go the round of the press. After a time Mr Ward's

sayings were gathered up into a book, and a careful reprint of that, minus some sketches which have nothing to do with the "showman," is now before the reader.

Artemus Ward is, as may have been surmised, a *nom de plume*. The real name of the author is Charles F. Brown; and as his own biography affords a very fair example of the strange ups and downs incidental to American life, the following sketch from a New York paper will not be deemed out of place here:—

He was born away down east in the town of Waterford, Me., in 1836. When quite young he entered a printing-office, and in a short time was considered a first-rate type-sticker; but getting tired of seeing the same old faces every day, he determined to start out on a travelling tour. He did so, and visited all the principal towns in New England, stopping at each place for a brief period, working at his trade. He finally settled down in Boston, where he worked with "stick and rule" until his genius soared above the "case," and he was soon ensconced in the editorial chair, revelling in the flowery paths of literature. Comic stories and comic essays were his "forte," as a celebrated divine once remarked. His effusions were read far and wide, and gained for him in a short time a very enviable reputation. Boston proving too small for the development of his ambitious ideas, he packed up his carpet bag and steered for the West. On the shores of Lake Erie, and on the banks of the Ohio and Mississippi, he picked up that knowledge of Western life, and acquired that acute insight into the comic side of Western character, which have stood out so conspicuously in his humorous sketches. In Toledo, Ohio, Mr Brown gained much credit as a writer. From Toledo he wended his steps to Cleveland, and took up his quarters in the editorial department of the *Plaindealer*. Up "to this pint in his eventful life" he was known as plain Charles F. Brown, but as soon as he commenced operations in Cleveland he baptized himself "Artemus Ward." Assuming the management of his celebrated "wax figures," his fame waxed higher and higher. Cleveland, like all other places that he had visited, became in its turn too small to hold him any longer, and he came to New York in the fall of 1860, and became enrolled among the corps editorial of *Vanity Fair*. His first attempt at lecturing was at Norwich, Conn., since which time he has been well known as a lecturer and comic author. His chief subjects are "The Babes in the Wood," "Sixty Minutes in Africa," "An Hour with President Lincoln," "Artemus Ward's Struggle with the Ghost," and "Life among the Mormons." His lectures have been among the most popular of any delivered